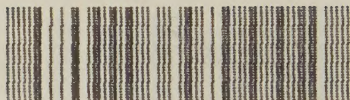


WP 1043160 8



1109967801





Library and Learning Resources

785.747

Acc.
No. 110996

Class
No. ~~780.92~~ BEE/HAD

This book is due for return on the last date shown below,
unless requested by another borrower, in which case
it may be recalled any time after one week.

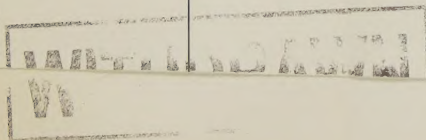
17 JUN 1999

1 JUN 1000

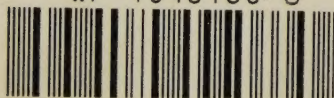
23 FEB 2005

14 DEC 2007

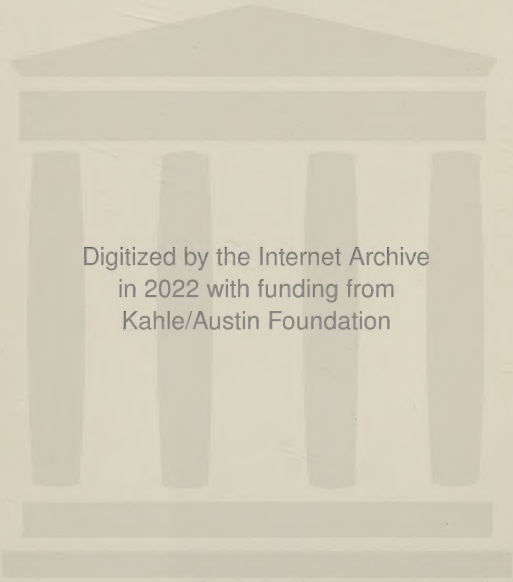
11 JAN 2008



WP 1043160 8



785.14 ✓



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

'THE MUSICAL PILGRIM'

General Editor

Dr. Arthur Somervell

Beethoven's Op. 18
Quartets

By W. H. HADOW

780.

92

BEE

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD

1926

C/n x 1148259

Oxford University Press

London Edinburgh Glasgow Copenhagen

New York Toronto Melbourne Cape Town

Bombay Calcutta Madras Shanghai

Humphrey Milford Publisher to the UNIVERSITY

Acc. No.	110996	
Cl. No.	185.14 780.92 REC/NAB	
17 SEP 1979		
Ref.	S/Ref	STL
T.P.	C.B.C.	Stack
WEST MIDLANDS COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION LIBRARY		

Printed in England

At the OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

By John Johnson

Printer to the University

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	5
NOTE ON NOMENCLATURE AND CLASSIFICATION .	10
OP. 18 QUARTETS	
No. 1 in F Major	14
No. 2 in G Major	23
No. 3 in D Major	31
No. 4 in C Minor	40
No. 5 in A Major	48
No. 6 in B \flat Major	54

INTRODUCTION

THE manuscripts of the Op. 18 quartets have been lost, and the information about them is scanty and partly conjectural. It is most probable that they were begun about 1798 (Grove places the date rather earlier): it is certain that they were published by Mollo in 1801; the first three in the early summer, the last three in October. They thus cover the period during which Beethoven was writing the violin sonatas Op. 12, the pianoforte sonatas from the *Pathétique* to the *Pastoral*, the pianoforte concertos in B \flat , C and C minor, the Septet, the First symphony, *Prometheus* and the *Mount of Olives*.

During this period Beethoven made friends with an old professor—twenty-two years his senior—named Emanuel Aloys Förster, who lived in Vienna and gave composition lessons. Förster, a competent teacher and an adventurous quartet-writer, held twice a week at his house musical parties which were attended by some of the most famous virtuosi of the time: Schuppanzigh who became Beethoven's favourite first violin, Linke the 'cellist, Weiss the greatest viola player in the city, and many others. Beethoven had free access to this house and was a constant visitor: it may be taken as positive that the six quartets were tried here in manuscript and discussed between the composer and the performers. Indeed, we have on this point a tiny but illuminating piece of evidence. On 25 June

6 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

1799, Beethoven gave Amenda a copy of the quartet in F with an affectionate inscription on the first violin part. 'Whenever you play it', he says, 'recall the days that we have spent together.' About a year later he wrote to Amenda: 'Do not give your quartet to anybody because I have greatly changed it, having learned how to write quartets properly.' Whether this implies actual instruction from Förster is uncertain—Beethoven afterwards spoke of him as his 'Alte Meister', and recommended pupils to go to him—in either case we may conclude that the quartets owe something of their present shape to the suggestions and criticisms of the players. This is worth noting because it is commonly asserted that Beethoven was an unreasonably obstinate person who would not take advice from anybody. He assuredly would not take advice from Albrechtsberger, and for good cause; but the same honesty which made him charge half-price for a concerto, 'because it is not my best work', gave him an open mind to artists who really understood the subjects in which he was interested. It may be added that three of them—Schuppanzigh, Weiss, and Linke—played in the regular quartet which produced his later chamber-works at the palace of Prince Rasoumovsky.

There is a letter to Hoffmeister of Leipsic (the fore-runner of Peters), dated 15 December 1800, in which Beethoven, speaking of the Septet, says, 'All the parts are obbligati', and adds the characteristic phrase, 'I cannot write anything not obbligato.' To appreciate the full importance of this it is necessary to go back a little way in the history of chamber music. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the level of skill in string playing was still very low: Corelli was regarded as the climax of sheer difficulty, and the

few comparative virtuosi required for their display the position of first violin or violoncello. It is indeed probable that these alone were at all clearly heard. The ears of the patron were not yet attuned to nice distinctions, and so long as there was a recognizable tune at the top and a solid bass at the bottom it did not seem to matter much what happened between them. Bach, no doubt, would have entirely altered the course of events, but it must be remembered that by the end of the century not a page of Bach's concerted music had been published, and the general standard of the age may almost be illustrated by a rejoinder of the child Mozart, who when warned by his father not to come and spoil the quartet-party, replied with weeping tears, 'But, papa, one doesn't need to have learned the violin in order to play a second-violin part.' From the beginning of the Viennese period there was unquestionably a great improvement; both Haydn and Mozart himself advanced nearer and nearer to the ideal of a 'quatuor dialogué'; but it is no disrespect to their genius to say that they never wholly attained to it. And of this we may, if we will, find a crucial instance. Haydn's latest quartets were written during the same years as Beethoven's earliest. For melody, for purity, for transparence of style, Haydn's are in their kind unsurpassed: in balance of instruments they seem to belong to an earlier generation than Beethoven. The first violin parts are always brilliant and characteristic, the 'cello parts very often; the intervening voices, though far removed from the supers and chorus-singers of the earlier days, are too frequently contented with the role of the hero's friend or the heroine's confidante. But in Beethoven's Op. 18 the balance is perfect, the interest is distributed with an

entirely even hand. He has, indeed, less virtuosity than Haydn, though he demands more concentrated intelligence; the steady light which illumines his work is diffused over the whole canvas. And part of the reason may well be that he had at his disposal a complete group of executive artists such as were not gathered together even at Eisenstadt.

Of his constructive power there is little need here to speak: the subject has been abundantly discussed in text-books and critical essays. The two focal points are: one, that he had the greatest constructive genius of any musician who ever lived—perhaps of any artist except Shakespeare; the other, that he entered into the full inheritance of Mozart and Haydn, that he could assume in his hearers a general acquaintance with the forms of the sonata movements, and could therefore treat them with a freedom which would have been impossible to his predecessors. The result is that in all six quartets there is not an otiose or superfluous bar. The themes may differ in value, we shall see later that this is so, but the interweaving of this texture is as perfect as human art can achieve. In later life he touched deeper issues: he never wrote with a more complete mastery of his resources.

Readers who wish to study these quartets with fullest appreciation are strongly recommended to collate them with the rest of Beethoven's early chamber works: with the pianoforte trios, Op. 1 (especially the third), with the violin sonatas, Op. 12, and with the pianoforte sonatas up to Op. 26. Many points, both of style and of structure, will be elucidated by the comparison. For the quartets themselves it is advisable that students, in addition to reading the scores, should hear them whenever occasion can be found; either on the strings, or, if these are not

available, in four-hand pianoforte versions or in the reproductions of the gramophone. All performances should, if possible, be followed score in hand: the 'Miniature' scores are easy to read and are generally accessible.

NOTE

EXACT systems of nomenclature and classification are usually tiresome and occasionally misleading. It must be remembered that the instrumental forms were largely developed by Beethoven, and that they grew under his hand. The coda, for instance, which before his time was often no more than an 'Amen', was sometimes extended by him until it was as long or nearly as long as the rest of the movement put together, and throughout the whole work he claimed and exercised the right of treating his materials with great freedom. But just as it is convenient to divide a play into acts and scenes, or a novel into chapters, so it may be generally useful here to indicate the various architectural plans on which he built the superstructures of Op. 18.

1. Simple Binary Form: two clauses of equal or approximately equal length set in exact antithesis. Often, but not always, the first clause modulates away from the tonic key and the second returns to it or maintains it. Examples of this form are the Adagio of the second quartet, the Air for Variations of the fifth and the Trio of the sixth.

2. Simple Ternary Form: three clauses of which the third restates the first, with or without modifications, and is separated from it by a clause of contrast. Examples of this form are the Scherzos of the first, second, and sixth quartets, the lyric Allegro of the third and the Minuets of the fourth and fifth.

Some authorities classify these two forms on a different basis; holding that a movement is Binary if the first clause modulates away from the tonic, and Ternary if it does not. The evidence, part of which is historical, would take too much space to recount here: on the whole it seems more scientific to say that a Binary form is twofold in basis and a Ternary form threefold, and that to this the question of modulation, though important, is subordinate. The common mark of a Ternary form is the reappearance of the principal theme in the tonic after the clause of contrast. To both forms, but more often to the Ternary, Beethoven, when he thinks fit, appends a coda or epilogue.

3. The so-called Sonata-form or First Movement form, used by Beethoven for the first movements of all six quartets, for the slow movement of the first, the scherzando of the fourth, and the finales of the second, third, and fifth. This is the most elaborate of all the structural plans which Beethoven employs: he had a special predilection for it, and it influences his work almost as much as fugal counterpoint does that of Bach. As used in Op. 18 it consists of three main divisions, generally followed by a coda. The first, called the exposition, contains two 'subjects', or musical paragraphs, one in the tonic, the other in a contrasted key, connected by a transitional passage which modulates from one to the other. The second, called the development section, takes at choice any of the themes or melodies presented in the exposition, and weaves them into a fantasia with such varieties of key, modulation, harmony, and the like as the invention of the composer suggests. The third, called the recapitulation, restates the exposition with such changes as are necessary to place the second subject, as well as the first, in the tonic key. The coda sums

12 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

up the whole movement as the envoy of a novel may sum up or finish the plot. Thus, the scheme is as follows :

<i>Exposition.</i>	<i>Development Section.</i>	<i>Recapitulation.</i>	<i>Coda.</i>
1st subject in tonic key. Transition modulating to 2nd subject in contrasted key.	Free handling of themes from exposition, usually with great variety of keys.	1st subject in tonic. Transition altered so as to lead to 2nd subject in tonic.	Farewell treatment of any themes on which Beethoven wishes to end.

In some first movements, but not in those of Op. 18, the exposition is preceded by an introduction or prologue in slow time. See, however, the finale of No. 6.

Four points may be noted for consideration :

(a) Beethoven always makes the second subject longer than the first. As the tonic key is to prevail in the recapitulation it is advisable, on grounds of balance, that the contrasted key should in the exposition occupy the chief place.

(b) The exposition is customarily repeated. To this there is no parallel in any other art : one cannot, for example, imagine a play in which the first act is presented twice over. The reason, which again is partly historical, contains a real point of musical structure. It is necessary to the understanding of the plot that the hearer should clearly recognize the various themes as they are treated in the development section ; he is helped in doing this if he has already heard them twice. But, as hearers have progressed in musical experience the need for this has diminished, and in many later works, notably those of the present day, the repeat has been discontinued.

(c) The crucial place in the plot is that at which the development section passes into the recapitulation; at which, in other words, the knot of adventure is resolved and the voyage comes into smooth water. Beethoven always marks this by some special indication, some climax of interest as the *dénouement* approaches, and in each of his successive works he invents a new one.

(d) If any passage is conspicuously absent from the main body of the work we may usually assume that it will appear in the coda. Beethoven has postponed it in order that we may notice its absence and welcome it the more when it comes.

4. The Rondo. The earliest form of Rondo is that of a recurrent melodic stanza, the reappearances of which are separated from each other by episodes in contrasted keys: much as the chorus or burden of a song alternates with the solo verses. Purcell's 'I attempt from love's sickness to fly' is a perfect example of a rondo in this sense. Beethoven after his manner develops this by crossing it with his favourite 'sonata-form', so that the first episode, often introduced by a formal transition, is recapitulated towards the end in the tonic key. His form, therefore, is—(a) principal subject, tonic key, (b) first episode, contrasted key, (c) principal subject, 2nd appearance, tonic key, (d) second episode, new contrasted key, (e) principal subject, 3rd appearance, tonic key, (f) *first episode transposed to tonic key*, (g) principal subject, 4th appearance, tonic key, freely treated and merging into the coda.

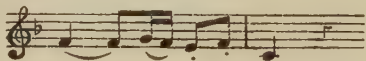
Examples of this form are the Finales of Nos. 1, 4, and 6. See also the slow movement of No. 3.

No. 1 in F Major

SECOND in order of composition: put first in the published order at the recommendation of Schuppanzigh.

I. *Allegro con brio.*

One of Beethoven's most notable devices for holding together a complex movement is to open it with a clear distinctive phrase, simple enough to suit a variety of contexts, incisive enough to be easily recognizable in them all, and to recall it at moments of crisis throughout the music. A familiar example is the opening *Allegro* of the Fifth symphony. Another, in its way even more remarkable, is that of the third pianoforte trio with which last the present movement should be carefully compared. Here the opening phrase, which may, for convenience, be called the 'motto theme', is



theme discussed by viola and first violin which most ingeniously combines it with the transitional melody: then at bar 50 a flourish of scale passages, drawing up and presenting arms to tell us that the second subject is coming. This piece of ceremonial is really a legacy from Beethoven's predecessors—Mozart was specially fond of it—as the need for ceremonial faded Beethoven laid it aside, or used it only when, as in the pianoforte sonata, Op. 106, he wanted to throw us off the scent. And after all this pageantry the second subject enters so quietly (bar 56) that we hardly know when it has begun: first a dainty tripping figure in C major



divided among the strings, followed by (b) another reminiscence of the motto theme, (c) a rushing scale passage, ending on a full close (d) a new ascending melody in C major—bar 84 onwards—interrupted towards the end by a series of gruff, unexpected chords, (e) a final cadence phrase (notice the 'cello part) leading to the double bar and the repeat.

The development section begins by repeating in A major the flourish with which the exposition ended, and then for the next 48 bars (119 to 167) occupies itself entirely with the motto theme, showing it in new lights, weaving it into new textures, even (bars 139 to 150) playing with its distinctive rhythm. It will be noticed that at the beginning of all this (bar 119) the whole quartet is forcibly and without modulation shifted up a semitone—in this case from A to B \flat . Beethoven often employs this device to give a sense of strangeness, or to arouse expectation, and he always follows it with something of special moment.

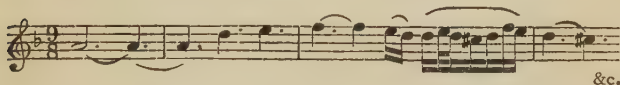
There is another instance in the Trio of this quartet : others in the Finales of the second and third ; others in the first movements of the early pianoforte sonatas, A major, C major, and D major. The development section ends (bars 167 to 179) with a series of running scale passages, through which is piled up an immense dominant seventh chord—like Pelion on Ossa—until with a soaring flight of the first violin the music breaks (bar 179) into the recapitulation. Of this nothing need be said except that the first subject and the transition are both curtailed (compare bars 179–217 with bars 1–56), and that the second subject proceeds, clause by clause in the tonic key. At bar 274 the coda begins with a striding upward passage in crotchets :



passion and poignance; and that the manner of writing is largely in duet.

The structure of the movement is similar to that of its predecessor, with a narrower range of topics in proportion to its slower tempo. 'A long line', said Charles Lamb, 'is a line which takes a long time in saying,' and the length of a piece of music is not necessarily determined by the number of its bars. As becomes an elegiac movement, it relies more on melodic continuity than on variety of thematic treatment; but the chief organic divisions are not less clearly recognizable.

After one bar of accompaniment-figure the violin gives out the first subject (bar 2 to the beginning of bar 14): a melody as tragic and moving as even Beethoven ever composed:



with an extended cadence, rising at the end to the tonic. At bar 14 the transition (bars 14 to 26) begins with a 'cello solo, which starts as if it were going to be a re-echo of the violin melody, but passes at once through an iridescent modulation (F minor, B \flat minor, E \flat major, C in four bars) to a tentative hesitating quaver-passage distributed among the four strings. From bars 26 to 45 follows the second subject, in the relative major key: a quiet, soothing melody given out by the second violin and answered by the first, a flowing semiquaver passage alternating between F minor and F major, and a closing cadence-phrase in F major which seems to bring the whole section to a climax of pathos. After a tiny pause—for the tension has been too great—the development section

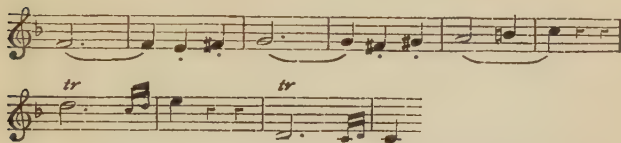
18 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

proceeds—two bars of flowing semiquavers from the second subject, followed by close imitative treatment of the first subject, which is interwoven with a quivering string figure, first on the violin and then on the 'cello (see bars 48 to 59). At bar 63 begins the recapitulation, the first subject notable for the elaboration of the accompaniment, the transition notable for its absence (compare bars 75-6 with bars 13-26). The experienced hearer of Beethoven will expect—and will not be disappointed—that so integral a part of this movement has not been omitted altogether but only deferred to a more telling place of entry. Such a place is found at the opening of the coda (bar 96), where the 'cello solo makes its due appearance and dominates the rest of the movement almost until the end. Note the remarkable effect produced in this coda by Beethoven's use of the tremolando. The skilful and economical employment of this device is one of the crucial signs of a great composer—Beethoven and Schubert especially excel in it—the clumsy or excessive employment of it is a sign-manual of mediocrity. One of the most miraculous examples of it is the slow-movement of Beethoven's piano trio in D major, another the Finale of Schubert's piano trio in B♭.

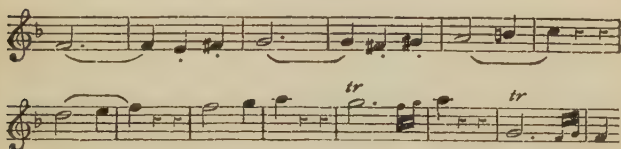
3. *Scherzo and Trio, Allegro molto. F major.*

The lyric numbers in a quartet are so short and so easily comprehended that Beethoven allows himself almost unlimited freedom in experimenting with them. Sometimes he keeps them within the exact limits of the form; sometimes he extends the final clause with new thematic treatment, often he protracts the whole movement with a coda of considerable length and importance.

The present Scherzo begins with a light-hearted melody modulating to the dominant :



(Notice, for reasons which will presently appear, the fifth and sixth bars.) After this has been repeated the music goes on to the Clause of Contrast (bars 11 to 36), modulating swiftly through A \flat , F minor, D \flat , and F minor again, ending with a long and provocative assertion of dominant harmony (bars 25 to 36), which leads back to the principal clause. This time, however, the clause has to end in the tonic, so Beethoven extends it thus :



At this point, so far as concerns the bare necessities, the movement might come to an end. Instead of that Beethoven takes the final cadence—marked by a dotted minim with a trill over it—and begins his coda by making it into a new subject (bars 51 to 62), occupying the bass in a sort of humorous grumpiness. Then the principal clause reappears again and with a dance of running crotchets the Scherzo finishes.

The Trio is entirely built on the contrast of two themes, one a leaping octave passage in unison (perhaps

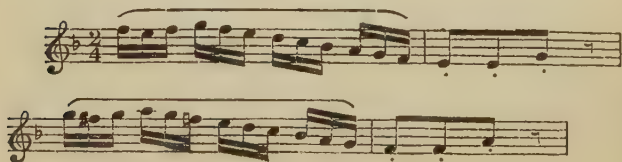
20 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

suggested by bars 25 to 29 of the Scherzo—but it is a joke of which Beethoven was fond up to the time of the last two symphonies); the other a running scale passage for the first violin. This enters on an accompaniment of holding-notes, in an abruptly contrasted key, and gradually modulates back to the tonic—the artistic order, just as the writer of a Ballade keeps his easy rhymes for the last stanza. After the double bar the holding-notes are transferred to the upper strings and the leaping figure bandied between viola and 'cello, until, on the return of the unison passage (bar 30), the strings climb another semitone and the running violin passage re-enters, not in the remote key of D \flat , but in the near key of G minor (contrast bars 36–8 with bars 3–5). From this it expatiates freely until it passes back again without a break into the restatement of the Scherzo.

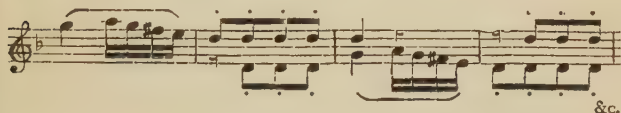
4. *Allegro. F major.*

There are passages in this movement which are suggestive of Sonata-form; but that it is a Rondo, in the extended sense of the term already described, is made clear by a comparison with the corresponding movements in some of the pianoforte sonatas: e. g. that in A major, Op. 2, No. 2, that in E \flat major, Op. 7, and that in D major, Op. 28. These are specifically called Rondos by Beethoven, and their form is in all essentials the same as this.

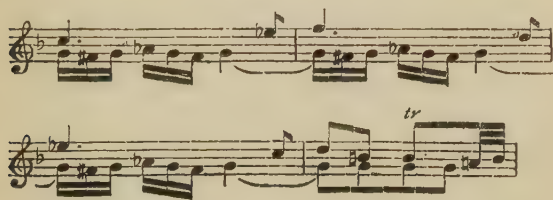
The principal theme (bars 1 to 18) begins as follows:



and ends at bar 18 with a full close in the tonic. Then follows a rather elaborate transition in three clauses, the first and last built on a gentle arpeggio figure in semiquavers, the second a vehement unison rising and descending the scale; at bar 43 appears the first episode properly so called :



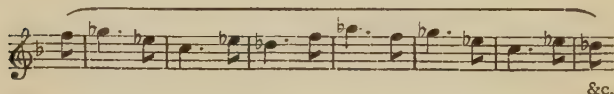
which is chiefly in C major, though Beethoven, to annoy the scholastics, writes the opening bars in G. This lasts until bar 91, being almost or completely organized as the second subject of a 'sonata-form'; (a) the little melody in canon quoted above; (b) development of the semiquaver figure from (a); (c) cadence-phrase in C minor and C major, with the characteristic triplets of the principal theme as counter-subject :



At bar 91 comes the second appearance of the principal theme, breaking off after bar 100 and merging into the second episode, which is of unusual length (bars 101 to 234), and is almost entirely occupied with thematic treatment of phrases already presented in the earlier part of the work. It is, indeed, this

22 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

portion of the movement which is most likely to raise a doubt on the question of nomenclature. It is certainly very like the development section of a 'sonata form', and we may even be misled by it if we do not remember (1) that Beethoven often uses the second episode of a Rondo for purposes of thematic treatment, and (2) that it is immediately preceded by a presentation of the principal theme in the tonic. The reader should note the curious rhythmic variant of the phrase (from the first episode) which has just been quoted :



which appears in D \flat and C from bars 136 to 159, and in D and E \flat from bars 190 to 209. It is a remarkable instance of the altered meaning which Beethoven can elicit from the simplest change of phraseology. Attention should also be paid to the two fugato passages (bars 117 to 133, and 159 to 185), which not only introduce a new and important character upon the stage, but display in so doing a very typical example of Beethoven's fugal writing. But the episode, for all its length, is quite easy of analysis ; and when, at bar 235, the viola introduces the principal theme for the third time, all is thenceforward plain sailing. The old transitional passage recurs from bar 253 onwards, with the necessary modifications (compare bars 267-87 with bars 33-40) ; the first episode follows, transposed into the tonic, and the movement closes with a coda (bars 327 to 381) in which the principal theme has the whole of the last word, and, like the hero of a famous comedy, is 'left talking'.

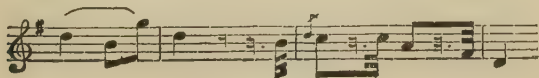
No. 2 in G Major

Third in order of composition.

It has sometimes been maintained that each of the different keys has its own quality and character. Herr Kreisler in Hoffmann's story wore, it will be remembered, 'a coat the colour of C \sharp minor with an E major coloured collar', and among his contemporaries the distinction was accepted with some misgiving by Schumann and with entire conviction by Berlioz. Beethoven seems to have inclined towards it—he spoke of B \flat minor as 'a gloomy key', and traces of its influence may perhaps be found in his compositions. Throughout his life, for example, G major is his favourite vehicle for the expression of serenity and happiness: the G major pianoforte concerto, the pianoforte sonata, Op. 14, No. 2, the last violin sonata, are all instances, and the light that shines from them irradiates in full measure the perfect spring-day loveliness of the present quartet.

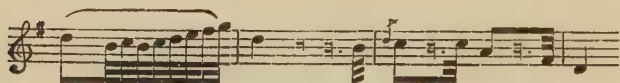
1. Allegro. G major.

The first subject (bars 1 to 20) is a melody in two stanzas, one of eight bars, the other of twelve, based on a characteristic and notable rhythmic figure. The bare outline of the opening theme would by itself have been beautiful enough:

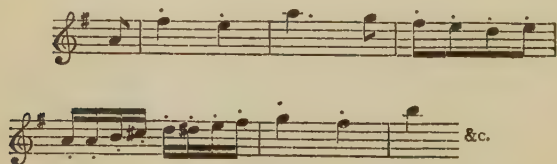


24 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

At the touch of Beethoven's hand it bursts into blossom :



Students of Bach will remember an exactly similar efflorescence in the theme of his D major fugue (No. 5 of the 48) presented in the same way and used for the same purpose. The delicate clustering figure not only enhances the beauty of the line, but fixes it in the memory so as to ensure its recognition during the rest of the movement. Note also with what sureness of touch Beethoven recalls its rhythm two bars before the cadence. A chapter might be written upon the drawing of this passage and not exhaust its invention and its mastery. The transition follows (bars 21 to 35), three firm strokes of crotchet unison answered by a flutter of semiquavers, and modulates away to the dominant, ending with a touch, perhaps half humorous, of the old ceremonial and pageantry. Next in due course comes the second subject (bars 36 to 81), which opens with a singing melody given out by the first violin and answered by the second :



At bar 51 there is a quasi-modulation to B minor,

and a new theme (which comes back to D at the cadence), again divided between the two violins with an upward gliding accompaniment figure on the 'cello. The third clause (bars 61 to 71) is a dialogue of pure comedy: the second violin propounds a phrase of which it is evidently rather proud:



The first violin amends it. The second violin humbly accepts the amendment; whereupon the first makes as if it had altered its mind—threatens a new correction, and having roused the hearer to a further pitch of expectation breaks off suddenly into a descending cascade of triplets which sound like laughter. And in this spirit of buoyant gaiety the exposition comes to an end, closing, to our complete satisfaction, with the cadence of the first subject. The development section (bars 82-145) begins by echoing in D minor the last bars of the exposition, continues through the transitional passage, playing lightly with its figure in semiquavers; at bar 101 the second stanza of the first subject enters on a crashing chord of E \flat , and founds upon the rhythm of its half-close a smooth meditative fugato, as though, despite a movement dedicated to cheerfulness, philosophy would for once 'be breaking in'. This mood lasts for some thirty bars (101 to 130): then Beethoven returns to his transitional passage, scattering the semiquavers into the air like petals, and while they are poising and eddying, and our whole attention is fixed upon them, the recapitulation suddenly enters with one of the most astonishing strokes of genius in all music:

26 The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18

The first system of the musical score consists of four staves. The first three staves are in treble clef, and the fourth is in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It contains two measures of music, each with a dynamic marking of *decres.* followed by *pp*. The second staff also begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It contains two measures of music, each with a dynamic marking of *decres.* followed by *pp*. The third staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It contains two measures of music, each with a dynamic marking of *decres.* followed by *pp*. The fourth staff begins with a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It contains two measures of music, each with a dynamic marking of *f*.

The second system of the musical score consists of four staves. The first three staves are in treble clef, and the fourth is in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It contains two measures of music, each with a dynamic marking of *f*. The second staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It contains two measures of music, each with a dynamic marking of *f*. The third staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It contains two measures of music, each with a dynamic marking of *sf*. The fourth staff begins with a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It contains two measures of music, each with a dynamic marking of *sf*.



This is as far beyond our estimation as it is beyond our praise. It is one of the 'nameless graces', as Pope calls them,

Which no methods teach
And which a master-hand alone can reach.

The rest of the recapitulation needs no formal analysis. The only noteworthy points are (1) that the first subject is considerably extended (bars 141 to 182, compared with bars 1 to 20), even appearing once in E major as though it had lost its way, (2) that the transition is omitted, having done much duty in the development section, and (3) that the second violin, which has been prominent throughout the movement, is specially so here, having the presentation of the second subject entrusted to it (bars 186 to 194), and a little later (bars 212 to 221), getting the better of its controversy with the first. At bar 232 enters the short coda, founded on the first subject, and ending with a delightful statement by the viola of its closing phrase.

28 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

2. *Adagio cantabile. Allegro. Tempo primo. C major.*

As simple in structure as a Minuet and Trio. The first section is a Binary movement of which the two constituent clauses are respectively 14 and 12 bars in length. It opens with a broad cantabile tune, dignified but full of feeling, which modulates from C to a full close (bar 14) in the dominant. The second half completes the melodic stanza, returning to the tonic (notice at bar 19 the reminiscence of bar 1) and closing with a quiet little cadence phrase in semi-quavers. The Allegro which follows picks up this cadence phrase and makes it into the principal theme of a short, bustling Ternary movement in which its rhythm is preserved throughout (principal clause modulating to dominant bars 30-8: clause of contrast mostly on dominant bars 39-46, principal clause repeated and ending in the tonic bars 47-55). After a short connecting link the original adagio reappears, much elaborated in phrase, but not essentially altered in structure. A word may be said here about Beethoven's 'brilliant' passages. There is no doubt that they were partly suggested by the desire of giving the executive artists an occasion for display—we can imagine Schuppanzigh and Linke vying with each other in this present adagio—but they were very much more than this—not accessories appended to the theme but blossoms and tendrils that grew naturally from its substance. They are, indeed, as organic, and often as melodious, as the ornamental passages of Bach, and have nothing in common with the clock-work roulades which afflicted so much of our salon-music during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

3. *Scherzo. Allegro. G major.*

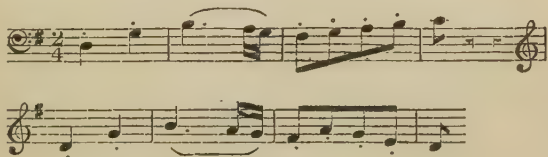
The principal clause is a flashing eight-bar tune



which sparkles from a new facet in the rhythmic change at the sixth bar. After the repeat comes the usual clause of contrast (note the stationary harmony in the first half of it and the contrary motion in the second), then the restatement of the principal clause, which breaks away into new developments at bar 22 and does not reach its cadence till bar 30. A coda of 13 bars brings this friendly lively music to an appropriate close. The Trio (C major) is built partly on a simple tune in crotchets, partly on a running passage in triplet quavers which first alternates with it in the clause of contrast and then combines with it, as accompaniment figure, in the restatement (compare bars 9-19 with bars 20-36). A short connecting passage leads back to the Scherzo.

4. *Allegro Molto quasi Presto. G major.*

An example of a Finale in First-movement form. It also (like the two chief movements of No. 1) is based on a motto theme of which Beethoven makes



such abundant use that he allows himself some corre-

30 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

sponding licences in the treatment of the form. The first subject, for instance (bars 1 to 38), is of unusual length, and ends not on a full close in the tonic but in a running upward passage to the dominant. To regard the last part of this as transition, which is technically possible, would make an awkward break in the sentence, and is, I think, ruled out by the recapitulation bars 275 to 285. If this be maintained we may regard the transition proper as beginning at bar 38 with the motto theme given out by the 'cello in D minor, and ending at bar 55 where the second subject enters as usual in the dominant. It may be analysed as follows: (a) a vigorous little melody presented by the first violin, and curiously reminiscent, especially a few bars later, of the Overture to *Zauberflöte*. This does not mean that Beethoven borrowed from Mozart, any more than Mozart borrowed from Clementi:—with men of this stature resemblances are of interest only as indicating similar habits of mind; (b) a slow-dropping passage of descending broken harmonies, the violin answered by the other three strings, with a very Beethovenish modulation (bars 94-6) into F major, and a new violin theme to match it:



(c) a return to the motto theme with running accompaniment in semiquavers; (d) a repetition of (b) in the tonic harmony of D major, ending on a pause at bar 139. The exposition is not repeated, and the movement proceeds at once to the development section. There is a sudden upheaval from D to E \flat (see above, p. 15), and then for over 100 bars Beethoven handles the motto theme and its constituent

parts. In process of treatment the music passes through E \flat (bars 140-64), C minor (164-72), the dominant of C, ambiguous in mode until at bar 178 it declares for the major which it maintains till bar 198, the dominant of G, again kept carefully ambiguous, with a deliberately false scent at bar 235; and so with long and artfully protracted suspense it climbs up to a dominant seventh, pauses on it (bars 246-7) and drops down sheer on the recapitulation. The constituent parts of this follow in the accustomed order, sometimes with rather more elaborate accompaniment, but with no structural innovation, and the only point for special comment is the skill with which Beethoven alters the key of the transition without altering its context (compare bars 283-5 with bars 36-8). The second subject stands in the same relation to the tonic as it did to the dominant in the exposition (compare bars 341-50 with bars 95-104), and the short coda—bars 298 to 412—serves to ring down the curtain on the motto-theme.

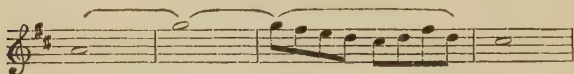
No. 3 in D Major

First in order of composition.

It is interesting to notice how often Beethoven's opening phrases, though of complete organic unity, can be divided into two members strongly contrasted with each other in rhythm or curve. The finale of the first quartet is one example, the first movement

32 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

of the second is another, a third is afforded by the alternation of semibreves and quavers in the present case :



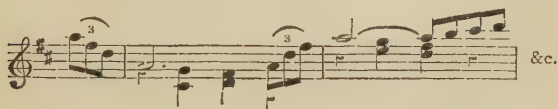
This has the obvious advantage of enabling the composer not only to treat his phrase as a whole but to use its two constituent parts as separate strands, and to weave them, when occasion arises, into separate fabrics. It thus places in his hand a valuable device for ensuring variety of detail, since each of these half-phrases implies and suggests its own context. An illustration will make this clear. Turn back to the first movement of the G major quartet and read its four opening bars. Then note how the second half of the phrase is treated by itself as countersubject to the fugato in bars 102-29, and the first half by itself as rhythmic dialogue in bars 160-8. And yet the phrase as a whole is a complete and symmetrical organic unity. So in the present movement Beethoven makes great use of the contrast between the semibreves and the quavers, now taking them in alternation, now combining them on different instruments and by this interplay maintaining throughout the 'unity in diversity' of his structure.

1. *Allegro. D major.*

The first subject (bars 1 to 35) is a treatment in free imitation of the opening phrases already quoted alternating and combining the rhythmic figures so as to fix them both firmly in the memory. Note especially the drawing of its outline :



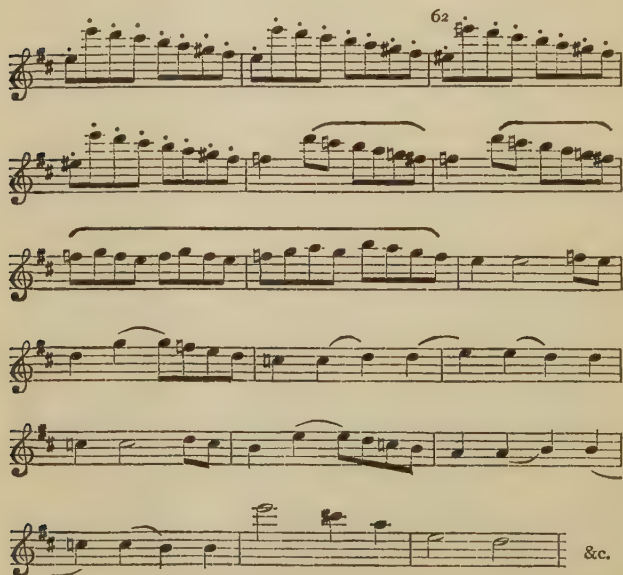
and the lightness and delicacy, after the solid chords, of the solo passage for first violin. At bar 35 the transition begins:



and goes on to prepare for the entry of the second subject. Towards its close is an interesting point of structure—a good example of the skill with which Beethoven first rouses, then baffles, and then satisfies our expectation. It was an almost universal convention at the time that if a ‘first movement’ was in a major key the second subject should be in the dominant, and it was still customary to announce this by a ceremonial passage solely designed to assert the tonality, just as the chorus in the old opera drew up on parade when the heroine was about to issue from the wings. In the early days of sonata-form there were psychological reasons for this: the structure was new and unfamiliar, the inexperienced hearer needed the most obvious and well-established signposts if he were not to lose his way in the plot. One of Beethoven’s favourite devices, especially in his early work, was to lull his audience into false security by offering allegiance to this convention, then to startle them by threatening to defy it, and at the dramatic moment to reconcile them by accepting it after all. Here, for

34 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

example, the ceremonial passage which begins at bar 52, looks at first as if it were the easy and ordinary approach to A major. But its very reiteration makes the hearer suspicious: so easy a method is not up to the level of Beethoven's invention: the indications are so evident that they may be intended to mislead. Suspicion deepens when the E \sharp enters at bar 62, passes into bewilderment when at bar 64 it is transformed to F \natural , cries out on heresy when at bar 68 the second subject enters in the remote and unexpected key of C major, and four bars later finds that we have somehow come back to A after all, and that the lost sheep is safe in the fold. Here is the passage in question:



The reader may at first be inclined to think that this is a great coil about unexpected modulations and unorthodox keys: that it is a mere matter of scientific precision and has no more human interest than the Loves of the Triangles or the conjugation of an irregular verb. Such a view would be a misunderstanding of the very nature of music. Beethoven's structures are not formal machines but living realities; they are as dramatic as a play of Shakespeare, and their themes are, in their own world, as personal as Iago or Falstaff. Nor is it true that we are unaffected by these structural changes of key. We may sometimes find it difficult to explain their influence, we may sometimes yield to it half consciously, but it is none the less vital to our understanding of the plot.

Having found its true tonal centre, the second subject proceeds as usual to the end of the exposition—a reminiscence of the first subject at bars 84 to 87, a very characteristic Beethovenish melody at bars 90 to 98, and a final exchange of repartees between the second and first violins, each contradicting the other until they leave the dispute by maintaining simultaneously their separate opinions. The development section (bars 108 to 157) is taken up with a simple treatment of the first subject and the transition—note the contrast of the semibreve figure and the quaver figure in combination, bars 142 to 150—and ends on an emphatic chord of C# major in reiterated triplets (bars 154, 155) from which by an exquisite change to D major—the C# continued in the bass as leading note—it ushers in the recapitulation. No analysis of this is needed, except to note that the first subject is slightly altered and curtailed (compare bars 158–183 with bars 1–35), and that the first part of the transition is omitted, both of these having been

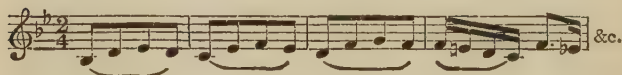
36 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

treated in the development section. A coda based on the two subjects and modulating from G minor through E \flat to D ends the movement. Note the appearance of the second subject in E \flat (bar 247) and its modulation to D, a final allusion to the 'unorthodox keys' in which it was presented earlier.

2. *Andante con moto. B \flat major.*

Beethoven does not often write a slow movement in rondo form (the Sonata Pathétique is an instance), and in the present example he has made one departure from the usual order of events which has led to some dispute as to the classification. But apart from the fact that the character of the movement is predominantly that of a rondo, the question may be settled by reference to Mozart's C major pianoforte sonata (No. 7), in which the Finale—called Rondo by its composer—is built upon the same general ground-plan.

It is not one of Beethoven's most inspired movements. Some isolated passages are of great beauty, notably the transition to the first episode and the opening portion of the second, but the principal subject is rather sullen, and for Beethoven, rather commonplace. It is first presented by the second violin, and repeated, an octave higher, by the first :

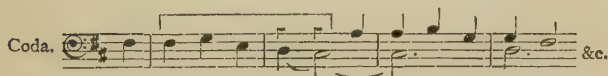
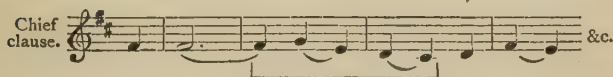


At bar 12 a transitional passage, with two dainty themes, leads to the first episode (bars 23 to 46), which is immediately followed by the second statement of the principal subject (bars 47 to 58). The early bars of the transition are then again used to

introduce the second episode, of which the opening phrase (bars 63 to 71) in $E\flat$ minor and $D\flat$ major is most moving and impassioned. The rest of the episode is a conversation on the principal subject, started by the 'cello (with full accompaniment) and taken up successively by the other strings. As this episode was preceded by the first half of the transition, so it is followed by the second half (compare bars 58-62 and 90-5 with bars 12-22), after which, according to the ordinary sequence of the form, we should expect the third appearance of the principal subject followed by the first episode in the tonic. Beethoven, however, reverses the order: proceeds at once to the first episode (bars 96-110) and takes the principal subject after it (bars 110-20). The coda (bars 120-50) is introduced by a sudden flurry of triplet chords which it alternates with reminiscences of the principal subject.

3. *Allegro. D major.*

The Scherzo: called for some reason by a more general name. It is a variant of the usual form, and remarkable in that the chief clause, which is commonly repeated after the clause of contrast, does not reappear at all. In its place we have a coda built on its second and third bars.



The Minore is another instance of that combination of running scales and holding harmonies which we

38 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

have already seen exemplified in the Trio of the first quartet. It leads back without a break to the Allegro, in which, against usual practice, the chief clause is repeated, apparently to restore to it some of the rights from which in the first presentation it was deprived.

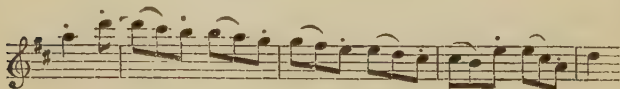
4. *Presto. D major.*

The old *Suite des pièces* ended as we know with a Gigue, a jolly galloping movement designed to restore the mental balance of hearers who had found the Allemande too elaborate or the Sarabande too grave. The present finale is Beethoven's idea of a Gigue, a breathless whirl of scattering triplets and streaming melodies which 'Tam o' Shanter might well have envied. There is no other piece of music which flies so fast or with so complete and triumphant a sense of escape.

It is in first-movement form with double bar and repeat marks. The first subject (bars 1 to 34) sets the pace with a curving flight of quavers :



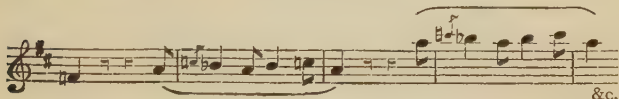
and carries it to its cadence on an exultant melody :



Then follows the transition (note the downward chords on a pedal bass of triplets from bars 42 to 50 and the eddying upward flight which answers them), and at bar 56 the second subject enters :



and continues in the same spirit to the double bar. In point of structure its most noticeable place is at bar 80, where we have again the upward shift of a semitone, a new melody :



and a most remarkable enharmonic change (D \sharp and E \flat) leading deviously back to the dominant. But the whole subject is full of speed and vigour, every theme joining in the cry, every instrument straining in full chase, and the quarry flying ever ahead.

From bar 120 to bar 180 the development section carries the first subject on its saddle-bow : at bar 180 a new melody breaks into the chase :



yet not so new but that it borrows its bass from the second subject ; and then follows another miraculous passage—one of those ‘new ideas’ which came to Beethoven, as he says, ‘without his knowing how’. We have already noted that one of the crucial points in his plots is the approach to the recapitulation—the point at which the problem of the intrigue approaches its *dénouement*. Here Beethoven takes the rhythm of the passage that has just been serving him for bass, and drives it through an iridescent mist of harmonies, diminishing the volume of sound until it

is only just audible, as though the whole company were passing for a moment out of sight. Then there is a sudden change from softest to loudest, and the music comes galloping back, like the rider in Stevenson, not to draw rein again before the close. The line between recapitulation and coda (bar 343) does not interpose any barrier, the impetus is too strong to be resisted, and it continues with unabated vigour until the final cadence.

No. 4 in C Minor

Probably last in order of composition: the only one for which no sketches have been found.

As Beethoven employs G major for moods of tenderness and serenity, so he seems to employ C minor for those of strength or vehemence or sternness. The present quartet may in this matter be compared with the C minor violin sonata, with the Finale of the C minor trio, with the Sonata Pathétique, with the last pianoforte sonata, and especially with the Fifth symphony. Indeed, one of the most wonderful passages of the symphony is here partly anticipated. It is therefore the more noticeable that this quartet contains no slow movement, though the tone of the Minuet is tragic. Generally, when Beethoven dispenses with a slow movement it is because the mood of the whole work is light-hearted—witness the Eighth

symphony and the pianoforte sonata, Op. 31, No. 3—here it may be for the opposite reason, because there is tragedy enough without it.

I. *Allegro ma non tanto. C minor.*

First subject (bars 1 to 13), a passionate melody, all the more appealing because it speaks softly, which begins :



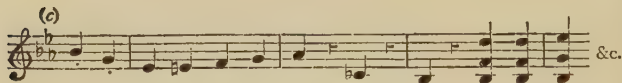
The transition (bars 13 to 33) begins with a crash of alternate tonic and dominant chords leading to a strenuous passage—like angry gestures—on a dominant pedal. At this point the student of Haydn (Herr Kreisler's amiable visitor¹) would expect the second subject to begin. Beethoven, however, defers it through a few tender consoling bars which not only relax the mood but carry the modulation more easily. The second subject, which enters at bar 33, consists of three main clauses with short connecting links. They are as follows (bars 33-49, 53-60, 70-7):



Notice how this borrows its opening figure from bars 5 and 6 of the first subject : an ingenious way of bringing them into interrelation :

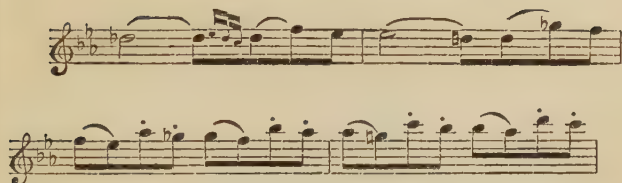
¹ See Hoffmann's *Kreisleriana*.

42 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*



By a very simple piece of ingenuity Beethoven makes the last of these modulate back to C minor for the repeat, and on to G minor for the development section (see bars 76, 77, and 78). This treats its themes in the order in which they appeared in the exposition—first subject from bars 78 to 108 (notice the close woven imitation from bar 94 onward), transition—the heavy chords—from 108 to 111, second subject bars 111 to 128, presented by the 'cello near the height of its compass and answered by the first violin. At bar 128 Beethoven begins to prepare directly for the recapitulation: eight bars of clambering arpeggios made ominous by his rare and sinister use of tremolando accompaniment. It is into an air as dark as that of Macbeth's castle that the central character of this drama returns.

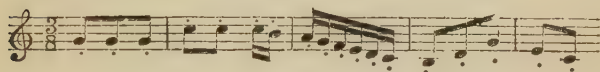
The recapitulation (bars 136 to 202) follows the course of the exposition, with the usual change of key, and presents no new point for comment except that the first part of the transition is extended (compare bars 148 to 157 with bars 13 to 16) and the last part of it deferred. The coda, which starts with a modulation to D \flat at bar 202, is notable for an anticipation of the hammer-strokes in the Fifth symphony:



The weapon that deals them is not yet so potently wielded, but it has been forged at the same anvil.

2. *Scherzo. Andante Scherzoso quasi Allegretto. C major.*

Usual first-movement form with double bar and repeat. The first subject (bars 1-32) is in two sections, (1) a short free fugato on the theme :



(2) a twelve-bar melodic passage on a dominant pedal. The transition (bars 33 to 42) recalls the former of these themes and modulates on it, simply and directly, to the dominant. At bar 42 the second subject enters in canonic imitation :



and ends on another imitative passage :



Of this theme, and of the three-quaver figure from the first subject, the development section weaves the chief part of its fabric (see bars 94 to 104 and 114 to 120). At bar 131 it builds up an edifice of ascending chords, inside which, at bar 146, the recapitulation begins. The more elaborate accompaniment of the first subject and the change in the transition (compare bars 181 to 190 with bars 33 to 42) required to bring the second subject into the tonic, are the only structural points to note. The coda begins at bar 225 and sums up the whole.

3. *Minuet. Allegretto. C minor.*

The principal clause is a poignant upward-climbing melody, made more urgent by the syncopation at bars 3 and 6, and coming to a full close in the tonic. After the double bar comes the clause of contrast, F minor and D major modulating back to C minor. On its restatement the principal clause is extended from eight bars to twelve (bars 32 to 43), and the movement ends with a short passionate coda. It is all very different from the dainty Minuets of the *Paradiesensaal*.

At bars 25 and 26 occurs a passage of some biographical interest. It will be seen that in returning to the dominant of C minor (here needed for the

re-entry of the principal clause), Beethoven has written consecutive fifths between the first violin and the 'cello. The context makes them inconspicuous; they could easily have been avoided: but there they are. Ries found them and ventured to reproach Beethoven with his breach of the regulations. Beethoven began by firmly denying their existence: when they were pointed out to him he asked, with dangerous simplicity, 'And who forbids them?' Ries in consternation answered, 'Why, Fux and Marpurg and Kirnberger, and—and everybody.' 'Well,' said Beethoven, 'I allow them.'

The Trio illustrates the astonishing beauty which Beethoven knows how to conjure from the most elementary materials. Theme and accompaniment-figure together are little more than bare statements of the triad and the dominant seventh, yet the whole fabric of the movement is a pure delight. Note the effect of breaking the first violin part into triplet quavers—if it were in plain crotchets the loss would be incalculable—and the magical introduction of the cadence-phrase after the pause at bar 15. The movement is in simple Binary form, the second part almost exactly balancing the first, and modulating back to the tonic from which the first has modulated away. It is not repeated, but returns direct to the Scherzo on an interrupted cadence and a couple of quiet chords.

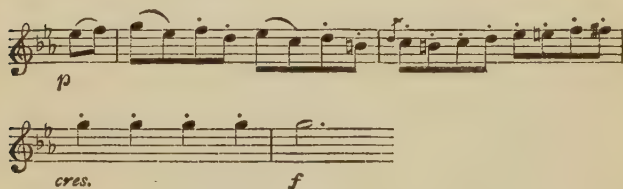
4. *Allegro. C minor.*

A rondo, the form of which is made unusually clear by the presentation of the chief subject, and of both the episodes, as separate sections enclosed within double bars. Beethoven has elsewhere adopted this method for the second episode (see the pianoforte

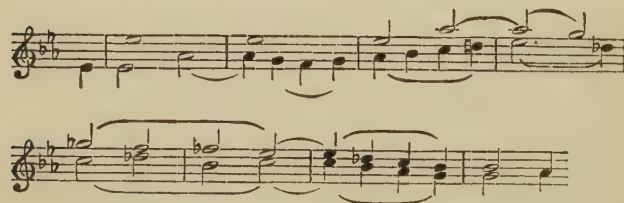
46 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

sonatas in A, Op. 2, No. 2, and in E \flat , Op. 7), but its extension to the first is very rare, and is probably explained in this place by the rush and vigour of the movement which no intervention of frontier-lines has any power to check. The formal analysis is:

(a) Principal subject (bars 1 to 16), C minor: a melody in two stanzas, both repeated. Observe the dramatic effect of beginning it softly and gradually raising it to a climax:



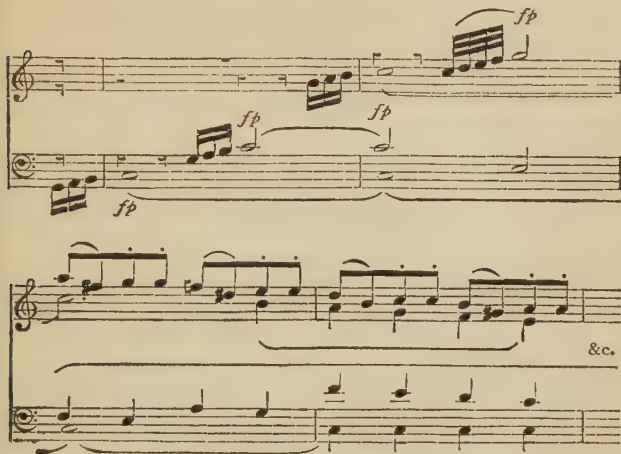
(b) First episode (bars 17 to 40), A \flat major. Owing to the adoption of the sectional plan there is no transition. The tune is divided between the two violins, a device of which Beethoven made great use in later life (e. g. the air for variations in the C \sharp minor quartet).



(c) Second appearance of principal subject with the repeats slightly varied (bars 41 to 73).

(d) Second episode (bars 73 to 88), C major, also a sectional pair of stanzas enclosed in double bars.

It is mostly on a pedal bass, like an enraged Musette:



(e) Third appearance of principal subject (bars 89 to 113), varied in imitative dialogue. Notice here the parts assigned to second violin and viola.

(f) A short episodic passage of violin arpeggios ending on the dominant (bars 113 to 120).

(g) First episode transposed into the tonic and slightly varied towards the end (bars 120 to 139).

(h) Coda founded on the first subject (bars 139 to 220), breaking into a prestissimo at bar 166, and ending with the opening phrase of the second episode.

The coda is of unusual length, though Beethoven sometimes surpassed it, as in the finale of the Eighth symphony and the first movement of the *Adieu Absence et Retour* sonata. Here the music is at such white-heat of excitement that it cannot stop until it falls from sheer exhaustion; and even then there

48 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

is in the last bar a tone of defiance. It is idle to fit the music to a particular picture, but there can be no doubt as to the violence of emotion by which this Finale is inspired.

One more piece of formal criticism. It will be noticed that all the movements of this quartet are in the same key, major or minor, the Trio alone breaking away. This is a rare reversion to the principles of the Suite: as a rule one movement at least is in a different key from the others, and the explanation here may be that there is no Adagio. It is worth noting that the Pastoral sonata (Op. 28), which is another example, was written some time in 1801, the year in which this quartet was published.

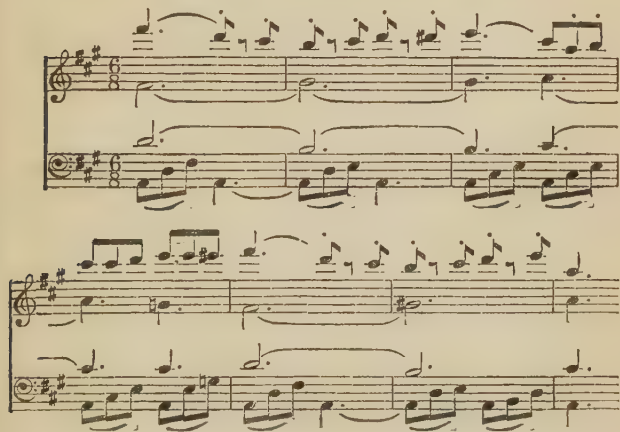
No. 5 in A Major

Probably fourth in order of composition. Sketches for a portion of the third movement are said to date from 1794: if this is so they are the earliest known elements of any among the Op. 18 quartets.

1. Allegro. A major.

As innocent as a fairy tale by Mozart; full of pure delicate melody and light-handed adventure, the strongest conceivable contrast to the force and turbulence of the last quartet. It is almost equally concise—79 bars of exposition as against 77—it is kept within a far narrower and more equable range of emotion.

The first subject (bars I to II) after a short trial-flight of ascending quavers breaks into a dainty tripping tune with holding-notes for the inner strings and an interesting harmonic figure for the 'cello :



Observe how high the violin part is placed above the others, a point of texture which not only gives it an ethereal quality, but makes specially salient the harmonic movement of the 'cello. From bars II to 24 comes the transition : a clustering violin-phrase with tapping chords ; and at bar 24 enters the second subject with a theme in the dominant minor :



which changes at bar 37 into the major, as though by deliberate amendment. Beethoven in his early days was fond of playing with this alternation of minor

and major: in the opening movements of his first three pianoforte sonatas it is used with increasing degrees of emphasis: musicians need not be reminded of the magical effect with which Schubert uses it, e. g. in the Romance from *Rosamunde*. Having established itself in E major the second subject proceeds with a cheerful little canon (bars 43 to 63), a short flourish extending and emphasizing the cadence (bars 63 to 67), a new melodic phrase opening with a discord (D, E, F \sharp , and G \sharp together) which was bold at the time, and a final gambado for the first violin, leading back to the double bar and the repeat. It should here be observed that the latter part of this movement (as also in the next quartet) is between repeat-marks: a practice habitual in the suites and not uncommon in the early sonatas, but now falling into desuetude.

The development section (bars 80 to 137) begins with the last melodic phrase of the second subject, continues with a brief allusion to the first, and at bar 100 settles down to thematic treatment of the transitional passage. We have before noted how fond Beethoven is of constructing an organic phrase out of two contrasting rhythms (see above, p. 32): so that he can use them separately as well as in combination. The figure of the transition



is exactly an instance in point, and the whole passage from bars 100 to 128 is a continuous example of their alternation. At bars 135, 136 the first violin rises and scatters like a rocket, and from its falling shower

emerges the first subject and the recapitulation. In this there is nothing to remark except that the transition is extended (compare bars 147 to 165 with bars 12 to 24) in order that the second subject may enter smoothly in the tonic: all the rest of the movement follows its accustomed way, and a few bars of rising quavers bring it to an end.

2. Minuet. A major.

If it be true that Minuet means 'the little dance', its name was never more justly applied than here. The whole movement is of gossamer: it might serve for the attendants of *Titania* or *Queen Mab*; in its whole course (Trio and all) there is only one loud bar, and that breaks off suddenly as if it were ashamed of its intrusion. The analysis—if it be not too frail for analysis—is as follows:

Minuet: principal clause, a violin melody answered by viola: clause of contrast, a running passage for the first violin leading to four bars of rather graver melody in C# minor. Then after a silent bar the principal clause is repeated, closing in the tonic and followed by eight bars of Coda (73 to 80).

Trio in Binary form, the first half modulating away from the tonic, the second half modulating back. Note that the chief melodic idea is given at the beginning of the movement to the second violin and viola in octaves, an interesting piece of quartet-scoring.

3. Andante Cantabile. D major.

An Air with five variations, the last of which leads into a coda.

Not one of Beethoven's best tunes: the six-note descent and ascent is a little too obvious, and though the beginning of the second clause is more interesting

it falls back again into the same enunciation of a truism.

The variations are successive embroideries of the theme, not so supremely beautiful as those of the C minor pianoforte trio (even Beethoven did not often rise to that height), but well-constructed, well-contrasted, and as full of vitality as their subject will allow. The fourth contains some exquisite effects of harmonic colour, simple enough on paper, but very effective in performance. It is, however, in the coda that the real Beethoven appears. After the fifth variation has been repeated there is a sudden change to B \flat major, and from the old steady theme Beethoven evolves a delightfully mischievous phrase which mocks it as a roguish apprentice might mock his employer :



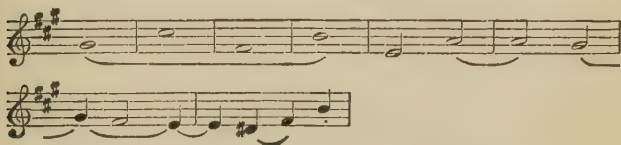
It is given out by the viola, taken up successively by the first violin and the 'cello in D major and by the second violin in G major, and wherever it goes it is accompanied by the opening phrase of the Air, watching with obvious misgiving this audacious burlesque of its dignified respectability. This piece of pure comedy is worth all the rest of the movement put together ; and it is enhanced by the portentous gravity with which, when it is over, the representative of law and order reasserts himself.

4. *Allegro. A major.*

First-movement form with nothing exceptional in its structure. The first subject (bars 1 to 12) has a noticeable opening figure, of which great use is made afterwards :



The transition (bars 12 to 35) consists of a crotchet passage interrupted at every turn by the opening figure of the first subject, to which after an unequal struggle it gives way. The second subject (bars 36 to 94) begins on a melody which, with simpler harmonization, Beethoven had already used in the Finale of the Sonata Pathétique :



(Observe how the rhythm quickens as it proceeds.) Beethoven so rarely borrows even from his own store that this example demands more than a passing mention. It is an ideally good quartet theme, far better suited to the strings than the piano, and it

54 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

lends colour to the story that the Finale of the Sonata Pathétique was originally written as a string trio. In any case the treatment here is entirely new, especially the downward flight of crotchets which accompany its second statement (bars 44 to 50). After it comes thematic treatment, in close imitation, of its last bar (compare bar 50 with the bars that follow it) and a long-protracted cadence-phrase in E major, which ends the exposition. The development section (bars 95 to 169) is almost entirely taken up with the first subject, the opening phrase of which is never far away. At bar 134 the second subject tries to get a hearing, but it is swept away, protesting as it goes (see bars 137 seq.), and the first again holds the field. At the end of it our attention is attracted by a phrase of four-crotchet chords answering a final appeal from the first-subject figure (bars 154 to 166), and then, after a long semibreve cadence, the Recapitulation begins. The transition is as usual altered to lead to the tonic (compare bars 181 to 208 with bars 12 to 35), and the second subject proceeds in that key without any change of substance. At bar 265 the coda overlaps it and continues, on the theme of the first subject, until the end. The quaver-figure which opened the movement has, as one might expect, the last word.

No. 6 in B♭ Major

Probably the fifth in order of composition.

It is a commonplace of criticism that Homer occasionally nods. Shakespeare wrote the dialogue between Speed and Proteus, Milton wrote the sonnet on Tetrachordon, Wordsworth not only wrote 'The

Borderers', but thought highly of it; Beethoven wrote the early sonata in E major and the opening of the present quartet. There is little that we can say about it: to pry into the weak moments of genius is an impiety from which we may well desire to shrink: it is enough to say that no part of this first movement is on Beethoven's customary levels of thought, and that the greater part is far below them. Compare these opening alternations of tonic and dominant with the Trio of the quartet in C minor: the difference is not wider between Pegasus and a draught-horse. But it is merely foolish to expect that a composer should be always at his best—if he were he would have no best—and there is no need to make outcry because he allows himself a few moments of relaxation. *Non ragioniam di lor ma guarda e passa.*

I. *Allegro con brio. B♭ major.*

The first subject (bars 1 to 19) is a theme in dialogue between first violin and 'cello with a simple accompaniment on the other strings:



At bar 19 it is overlapped by the transition which starts as if restating the theme, and at bar 30 modulates away on a scale-passage to the supertonic (C major), from which direction the second subject is to enter. In some other of Beethoven's early works the transition is influenced by the first subject (e.g. the second piano trio and the pianoforte sonatas in F minor, Op. 2, No. 1, and in D major, Op. 10, No. 3); indeed, this idiom reappears as late as the Waldstein, the Appassionata, and the 'Op. 106'; but there is,

56 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

I think, no other instance in which the repetition is so exact or in which it occupies so large a proportion of room. The second subject (bars 44 to 91) opens with a far more characteristic melody :



in which Beethoven again uses with great effect the alternation of major and minor (see especially bars 58 to 65), and so passes through a tumble of quickening rhythm—like a cascade gathering speed as it falls—until at bar 80 it finds a level course in the theme of the first subject. With this, and with the scales of the transition, the development section is occupied from bars 92 to 152—they are separated by the silent bar 114—after which a winding quaver-passage, divided evenly among the strings, leads to another silent bar, a long-drawn expectant chord, and the entry of the recapitulation. In this one point of structure is conspicuous. The first part of the transition, an exact repetition of which would here have been monotonous, is entirely rewritten (compare bars 194 to 207 with bars 19 to 33) ; it is not far enough removed to be incongruous, and yet it is sufficiently novel to stimulate a fresh interest—a stroke, even in untoward circumstances, of the master-hand. The rest of the movement follows the regular plan, and offers no point for comment except that it ends abruptly without a coda.

2. *Allegro ma non troppo. E♭ major.*

Written in the form which Beethoven frequently uses for his Adagios : an extended and elaborated Ternary with a coda in the tonic founded upon the clause of contrast. Though it is marked allegro it is wholly elegiac in character ; quiet meditative music

with melodies of 'linked sweetness' and long trailing tendrils of accompaniment; a feast of pure delight both to player and to listener. The principal clause (bars 1 to 16) is a melodic stanza of four lines in which the first, second, and fourth correspond, as they do in FitzGerald's Omar Khayyám, while the third intervenes and traverses its threefold rhyme:

A, B and D



C



For greater organic variety the first line ends on a half-close, and the second and fourth on full-closes. Notice the gradual heightening of the accompaniment—the first violin part in line 2 and the three lower strings in line 4.

At bar 17 the clause of contrast enters, partly occupied with a new theme in E \flat minor to B \flat minor:



58 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*



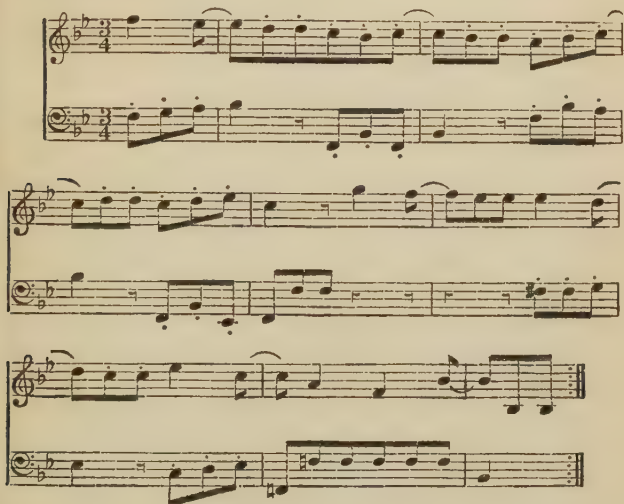
partly, from bar 35 onward, with anticipations of the principal clause which reappears from bars 42 to 60, its accompaniment much elaborated. There had, indeed, been no such polyphony for strings before this : it is entirely different from Bach, yet in its way equally distinctive ; and the gift here manifested was put to interest by Beethoven throughout his life. A notable instance may be found in the adagio of the 'Harp' quartet (Op. 74), another in the Andante of the quartet in B \flat (Op. 130) ; it is apparent to a greater or less degree on almost every page of his most mature compositions. The slow movement of the sonata, Op. 106, even transfers it to the pianoforte.

The restatement of the principal clause reaches its formal cadence at bar 60 ; it is extended for another six bars by a variant of its 'third line' (compare bars 61 to 66 with bars 8 to 12), then follows a short coda on the clause of contrast, and a 'dying fall' in which the last memories of the opening theme fade and disappear.

3. *Scherzo. Allegro. B \flat major.*

The pleasure that we derive from syncopation (when that device causes pleasure) is due to a kind of irony ; a conflict of opposing rhythms, that of the phrase and that of the bar. Its full effect belongs to a mature and educated art ; and though like other forms of irony it can be insufferably tedious in unskilful hands, it is, when directed by a master, a very telling means of expression. The whole rhythm of the present Scherzo is built upon this device. It is in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, i.e. the bars are of six quavers with the accents on the first, third, and fifth. Its phrasing tempts us

to believe that it is in $\frac{6}{8}$ time, with the accents on the first and fourth quavers, and as soon as it is at point of being successful it mockingly undeceives us. Consider, for instance, the last two bars of the principal clause as compared with the rest. (Treble and bass alone are given.)



Of course a great deal depends on the players. If they once let the bar-rhythm go the whole ironic effect is ruined, and we have instead two separate rhythms and an entire absence of illusion. We have all heard bad pianists 'interpret' Chopin's fifth Waltz as if the principal theme were in $\frac{6}{8}$, and so crush out of existence one of the most charming of his accompaniment figures. An equal crime is committed here by string players who are so anxious to be emphatic that they neglect their punctuation.

The form is simple and straightforward: a principal

60 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*

clause (bars 1 to 8) quoted above, a clause of contrast (bars 8 to 22) on the same rhythmic ambiguity—note how the $\frac{3}{4}$ time clearly emerges in the 'cello part at bar 15—a restatement of the principal clause at bar 22, and a coda at bar 30. The Trio is in Binary form, with two equal clauses set in antithesis; and we may notice that, in order to distinguish it as clearly as possible from the Scherzo, Beethoven founds it on one unmistakable rhythmic figure which persists throughout.

4. *La Malinconia, leading to Allegretto quasi Allegro, B♭ major.*

La Malinconia is one of Beethoven's few attempts at direct representation. Observe that it represents a state of mind, not a picture or a story, and is therefore well inside his later warning, 'Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei'. It is a curious little piece which may be, for once, considered under two aspects: that of its emotional significance and that of its formal place in the structure.

And first, it does really suggest melancholy: not the variegated sort practised by the Elizabethans, but the heavy mood of Heine or Leopardi. Its first theme is a plaintive little tune that seems to end upon a sob:



and wanders from key to key as its artless tale of sorrow unfolds. The second theme is even more unhappy:



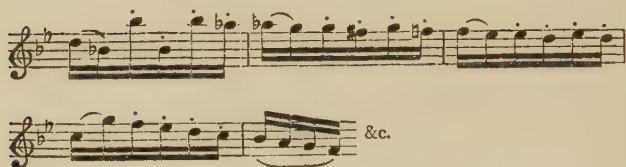
and it finds little consolation as it proceeds. There can be no doubt that music can in broad outline express joy or sorrow—it is only when we pass beyond these frontiers that we must be careful of our metaphors—and there is no more need here to question Beethoven's intention than to cavil at the success with which he has carried it out.

On the formal side the movement is not less interesting. The first-movement form, as Beethoven inherited it, allowed for an introduction or prologue in slow time, borrowed from the French overture of Lully, and frequently used in the symphonies of Haydn. Beethoven often adopts this plan—the second piano trio, the Sonata Pathétique, the Septet, the Second, Fourth, and Seventh symphonies are examples—here, having no regular slow movement, he extends its function to that of introducing the final rondo. And because there the tonic B \flat is going to be very clear and prevalent, he uses the mood of his *Malinconia* to obscure the tonality, so that when it emerges it shall come with the more freshness and vigour (compare the Introduction to the third Rasoumovsky quartet, Op. 59, No. 3). From this point of view the succession of remote keys, which at first hearing seems to have been determined by the caprice of the harmonies, is perceived to fit exactly its place in the dramatic scheme, and to be not a superfluous addition but an essential character in the plot.

The rondo follows directly without a break: its principal subject (bars 1 to 16) a jolly, merry tune which sings 'Begone dull care', with a cheerful voice :



62 *The Beethoven Quartets, Op. 18*



(Contrast this with the rhythm of the Scherzo: so like in appearance, so totally different in sound.) From bars 16 to 33 there is a passage of transition, and from 34 to 72 the first episode follows, perhaps a little longer than usual, but bound so closely to the subject by its chain of semiquavers that it does not allow our memory to weaken: in any case the last twelve bars (60–72) are of such direct anticipation that when the subject makes its second appearance we are fully prepared for it. After it has run its course (bars 72 to 87) we are confronted with a very interesting experiment in structure. So far we have had the first half of Beethoven's customary rondo form—(a) the principal subject, (b) transition and first episode in a contrasted key, (c) second appearance of the principal subject. We may naturally expect it to continue—(d) second episode, (e) third appearance of the principal subject, (f) transition and first episode transposed into the tonic, and so to the principal subject and the coda. Beethoven, however, has decided otherwise. In the slow movement of the D major quartet he has let the first episode take precedence of the subject: it now encroaches still further into the movement and claims a still more exalted station. In point of fact the complete analysis of the movement runs as follows: (a) principal subject, (b) transition and first episode in contrasted key, (c) second appearance of principal subject, (d) *transition and first episode transposed into the tonic,*

(e) second episode, (f) third appearance of principal subject, and (g) Coda. The second episode, in other words, follows immediately upon the first without any intervention of the principal subject. And as this appears to controvert the essential nature of the rondo form it presents, at first sight, a difficult problem. There is one supreme solution, and of course Beethoven finds it. His second episode (bars 138 to 178) is not a presentation of new themes (as it is, for instance, in the rondo of the C minor quartet), but a sort of dramatic scena in which the melody of the principal subject escapes from control and wanders away into the wilderness. There it is pursued by *La Malinconia* (bars 151 seq.), whom it tries, at first in vain and then successfully, to evade. The first attempt pens it into the impossible key of A minor: at the second *La Malinconia* leaves an exit unguarded, and the tune flies out (you can almost hear its cry of relief) with its goal at the tonic clearly in sight. As a matter of sober analysis, then, the explanation of this second episode is that it is founded on the principal subject and therefore serves to recall it to our minds. The introduction here of a phrase from *La Malinconia* (compare the first movement of the Sonata *Pathétique*) is as much for dramatic contrast as for structural need. At any rate with bar 177 the adventures are over: the principal subject once more at home continues his cheerful strain; and at bar 192 a coda, partly on the transition and partly on the principal subject, brings this pleasant, sunny-tempered rondo to a close.

Conclusion

From the foregoing account of the Op. 18 quartets a thousand details have been omitted for want of

space: such, for example, as Beethoven's great care and variety in bowing, and the special significance which this often gives to his phrase, the tiny changes of rhythm or harmony, so deftly placed that they astonish us by their depth and richness, the vitality of his ornament, the felicity of his style, the dramatic fitness with which he manages incident and prepares climax. Such a book as this can but open the door of the garden, and indicate the flower-beds and the fountains, and the shady coverts where students of Beethoven may find enjoyment for a lifetime. The only way, therefore, in which to utilize it is to read it side by side with the open score, and to give the score a vastly preponderating amount of attention. It is important, it is even necessary for any progress, to learn, as matter of fact, the principles of musical architecture, and to note in what chief respects Beethoven adopted or modified them in his own practice. But it is when those facts have been ascertained that real understanding begins. Then it is the reader's privilege to study the music bar by bar, bringing to it a trained ear and a mind already furnished and equipped: his reward will be the continuous discovery of beauties which when he first began were beyond his imagination. Horace advises us to turn the Greek poets 'with daily and with nightly hand': that is the advice that should be given to every student of Beethoven. Though we learn the notes until we are letter-perfect, we shall never master their secret: every time that we come back to it we shall meet it with fuller comprehension, like the face of a familiar friend which grows more beloved with every day of added experience and converse.

